

Vicar (and Churchwarden) Report for APCM 2020

While it is a privilege to be writing this APCM report for the reporting year 2019/2020 - which was to have been presented in April - we must acknowledge that from March onwards, St Peter's, along with other churches, has been a parish church experiencing unprecedented consequences of the global Coronavirus Pandemic.

The stoic spirit of 'the show will go on' resulted in the creation of a livestream service and the formation of St Beale's online Community and also the continuation of essential business, small groups, Bible Studies and nurture courses, including a successful Online Alpha course from which people are now attending our current Bible Study (thank you to Steven Knowles, Kathryn Beesley, Teresa Deeson, Rob Durrant, Naomi Parkin-Tyrie, Paul Smith and Liz Ambrose)

And now the doors are opened, both physical and online church communities worship together, and the zoom coffee opportunity to get together to say hello over a cuppa still carries on.

From incredible and creative techy support to efficient and effective admin support – from rigorous and robust health and safety support to selfless church-business (fabric and financial) via PCC and Fabric and Finance. From small group leadership to online coffee gatherings, regular meetings and worship participation – and from telephone support groups to WhatsApp community support – we have been entering into the spirit of 'caring and sharing' and taking responsibility to stay safe and we have also managed to have some light-hearted moments of respite and encouragement amidst these uncertain and somewhat worrying times along the way. I believe that the Holy Spirit really is moving in our hearts and in this place as we continue on....

I also believe we all contribute to that courageous and faithful spirit in one way or another – EVERYONE – and there is not one person – including the vicar(!) – who is any more or less important than the next and our prayers are all equally as lovingly received by God. But there are some people who have been inspired and driven in particular ways to spend much time and energy giving service to God through St Peter's.

So – in the absence of a Churchwarden for this period, I would like to especially mention and give thanks to in no order...:

- Firstly, for everyone who prays for the wellbeing and flourishing of church and parish communities and for everyone who continues to support St Peter's as a church building and church family at the centre of its community seeking to bring hospitality, welcome and love to all....
- Rev Sandy Cavalier who blesses us continually with her steadfast, reverent and faithful ministry and prayers – especially her wonderful sermons ☺ And Sandy also acts as link for our charity partnership with Seeds for Development
- Musical Director Brian Bailey and St Peter's Choir for upholding our choral tradition week by week
- For Lizzy Hendry who faithfully signed for Clive Davis (who is sadly unable to attend regularly in these times) and for others who were in need of signing at other times.
- Members of the PCC for their wise and trusting stewardship of the church business
- To Naomi Parkin-Tyrie, for all her hard work as PCC Secretary – and for her technical support (who gives Paul a run for his money! ☺)
- Pat and Ian Lapworth – for their incredibly efficient, faithful and steadfast commitment to the treasury and fabric business of St Peter's
- Sally Woods as our diligent Safeguarding Officer and Paul Smith and Sally for Health and Safety
- Fabric and Finance Team – Ian, Philip, Steven, Mike, Jonathan, Pat, Sally
- Members of the Worship and Spirituality group for pondering and planning of things worship, nurturing and spiritual, trying to find creative ways especially recently – Liz A, Vanda, Rob, Ian, Gerald Martin, Kathryn, Paul, Naomi, Brian Bailey
- Social and Fundraising Team - Rob Durrant, Pat Lapworth, Wendy Coxell, Vanda Bolton and Andrew Jones – for the most amazing tally of funds raised (over £7,000) out of some wonderful social events and experiences
- Kitchen Team – Led by Hugh Woods – Sally, Ian and Pat, Sue and Tim for delivering a lovely new kitchen towards the end of last year – and thank you to Gerald Blues and his work team for the fitting.
- Paul Smith and the debut Alpha Team 2019 – Elizabeth Bagnall, Alistair and Sascha Lockett, Karen Lott, Sam and Rob, Sally Woods and Sally Denny, Kathryn Beesley, Deborah Ling and Chris Wilkes and the wonderful caterers - who did an incredible job leading our first Nurture Course
- For those who lead small groups at various times – Paul, Naomi, Ian and Kathryn, and Steven and for those who participate...
- Helen Adam and Tiffany Rabjohns-Smith for the start-up of Junior Church once again
- Steven Knowles for setting up the new 'St Peter's Tramps' rambling group
- Naomi for setting up the Mental and Emotional Wellbeing Group (post – April 2020)
- Messy Church Team – Jonathan, Shirley, Nicola and Sheila Covey, Liz Ambrose, Nicky Hill, Vanda Bolton, Kathryn Beesley and Jacqui and Malcolm Arthur and all who help at these gatherings of fun, faith and fellowship that build up a sense of community and belonging of locals to their parish church
- Chris Wilkes for her huge admin support and encouragement – and to Frank for photocopying and stapling of our service and news sheets!
- And we thank Sue Davies who still helps us out with various administration and practical tasks when needed.
- Flower Guild - Chris Gray, Beryl Tate, Jill Yates, Jenny Emberson, Wendy Coxell – for the lovely flowers, festival and throughout the year
- Sue Davies for, amongst numerous other things, leading the Baptism Team and for looking after the bookings and users of Leverton Hall

- Grass-cutters and grounds people – Ian and Pat, Hugh, Sue and Tim Davies, Stuart Martin, Simon Rossiter, Rob Durrant, Neil Ambrose, Andrew Jones.
- Also, to Jim and Margaret Jeffery for their caretaking of the Memorial and surrounding grounds
- Cleaning team – Chris W, Sam Durrant for brass, Margaret Jeffery for linen, and all the busy ‘church-mice’ who help as and when and for Beryl who takes care of Leverton Hall – we are really grateful.....
- Deborah Ling – for coordinating the Foodbank Donations
- Magazine team - Roger Jefferyes, Christopher and Harriet Ellis, June Paine and Beverley Fabian and all the magazine deliverers and contributors – thank you for keeping this going month by month
- Magazine again – to Gerald Blues who deals with the magazine advertising which is an onerous task and generates significant income.
- Gerald Martin and the team of faithful Stewards and Servers and Readers and Intercessors who continue to do a wonderful job for us all year round and especially at this time for taking on-board new safety guidelines and entering into the spirit of keeping us all safe as we do what we can to find some sort of ‘normality’ in our Sunday services..

And more recently:

- Paul again for the way he stepped up and put St Peter’s ‘on the map’ as an innovative livestream church – and along with Vanda, has kept us all abreast of the latest opportunities online for worship and for local and wider information via our jam-packed Website
- Sally Woods who worked with Lynley Griffiths to publish our robust and detailed Risk Assessment that was approved by PCC – and to the ‘Opening Door’s’ team – Sally and Hugh, Chris Wilkes, Pat and Ian, Kathryn Beesley (who devised the Track and Trace procedure), and Sue Davies, who is gradually and diligently welcoming groups back to Leverton Hall
- The Techy Team – Liz Ambrose, Nicky Hill, Hugh Woods, Vanda Bolton and Steven Knowles with Roger and Paul on the side-lines - for making it possible to keep our Online and church building worshipping communities connected Sunday by Sunday – and for Roger Jefferyes for online ‘meeting and greeting and Teresa Deeson and Roger for pre-testing for livestream services!
- Jonathan and Naomi for providing us with beautiful music along the way of lockdown and beyond...

We also had some stoic and faithful friends who stepped down but who had worked for years for the glory of God through St Peter’s – Sue Davies who handed the parish administration baton to Chris Wilkes - Jack and Carol Crawford (Christian Aid) – Reg and Ivy Skeet (Pastoral Assistants) – Christopher Ellis – and of course, Bob Parrott for ten years of faithful sweeping of the church steps and surrounds – people still ask where Bob is and if he is doing okay! ☺

If I have missed anyone out from this list – you know that it wouldn’t have been intentional – so please let me know!

Last year I said:

“I pray that this coming year will continue to be one of a deepening sense of God’s presence, a growing in confidence, a building up of the church family and the joy of fellowship and community – and one that will see the seeds of God’s abundance begin to shoot forth in terms of spiritual and physical growth as more people will feel safe enough and compelled to ‘come and see’ in response to our intentional and genuine living out of the Gospel of hospitality and love.”

I think we have come a long way in making that visionary prayer a reality. Never let it be said that the heart of St Peter’s Church Family isn’t made up of courageous and faithful people who remember that their own faith is nurtured and deepened as they intentionally serve God, in the name of Jesus, through service to their church and community. Thanks be to God....

However - it isn’t hard to see that we need the continuing of such commitment, not just by a few, but by us all, in one way or another in a practical and financial sense.

- Practically – because we need new and sometimes younger ideas and energy as long-standing members are feeling the need to slow down and think of less energetic ways of contributing to our common life
- And financially – because more than ever right now we are feeling the pinch from the financial and social restrictions that a five-month lockdown has placed upon us, decreasing ability to socialise and fundraise, and for one reason or another, decreasing the funds of regular and weekly giving.

And so it is because of these two factors – and the fact of a huge increase in our Parish Share – that we will be working together these coming weeks and months to enter into an invitation to pray, reflect and ponder on what it means as a church family to work together and be inspired through our project ‘*Hope for Tomorrow – Committing to a Sustainable Future*’ We will hear more about that through verbal and written communication over the coming weeks.

Finally, thank you so much for your support and friendship to me. It has been a challenging year for each and every one of us in one way or another, what a blessing to be part of a warm and caring church family in times of need and in plenty?

And so for this year, I continue to pray for a deeper sense of the Holy Spirit working with us and through us in the outpouring of our lives, so that more and more of us might discover and use our gifts and passions for the flourishing of God’s kingdom as we seek to find new and creative ways to bring the hospitality, joy and love of Jesus Christ to each other and to the people whom we serve in these strange times – AND - that above all - we do so with enjoyment for being alongside dear friends and fellow travellers on the Way, all praying and working together through the ups and downs of life in a community that has the heart of and love for Jesus at its centre.